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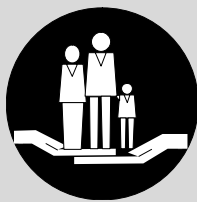
2009

Nargis- ***One Year on***

- *60th anniversary of Karen revolution*
- *Continuing human right abuses*
- *Health care messages*



THE NEWSLETTER OF THE COMMITTEE FOR INTERNALLY DISPLACED KAREN PEOPLE (CIDKP)



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Cyclone Nargis — One year on

In May 2008, cyclone Nargis ripped through southern Burma, killing at east 140,000 people and leaving over two million people homeless or injured.

At the time the Burma's military regime ignored help from foreign governments and aid agencies, and denied widespread access to the devastated Irrawaddy delta for weeks after the cyclone struck.

Today international journalists are still banned from reporting, but in spite of the bans local people do their best to get information out to the wider world.

Unbelievably, those Burmese people who tried to help cyclone victims are jailed by the regime.

On 10 April the regime sentenced six people to prison terms ranging from two to four years for burying cyclone victims. The six were: Dr Nay Win and his daughter Phyo Phyo Aung, Aung Kyaw San, Lin Htet Naing (aka Aung Thant Zin Oo), Phone Pyeit Kywe and Shein Yazar Tun – they were arrested by Military Affairs Security in June 2008 attempting to bury cyclone victims in Bogale Township in the Irrawaddy Delta in southern Burma. Popular comedian, Zarganar, was sentenced to 35-years in jail for helping cyclone victims without the permission of the regime. The regime continues to dictate how the international relief efforts work. On one hand they are willing to take the money on offer. The U.S. is providing a total of \$75 million worth of aid to help the people of Burma. The US based Refugees International says the Burmese people must not bear the brunt or pain of regime's actions.

“The Burmese regime is one of the most repressive in the world, but the people of Burma shouldn't be punished for the actions of the generals,” said Joel Charny, Vice President of Refugees International.

This is true, but not so easy to achieve. While the international community in unable to find solutions to free Burma, the Burmese army continues its military offensives against ethnic people in Eastern Burma, displacing thousands, political opponents of the regime are still being jailed. This will continue unless there is more pressure put on the regime from Asean and Burma's neighbours, China, Thailand and India.

MAKE A DIFFERENCE!

If you want to find out how you can help internally displaced Karen people: email; insidenews_cidkp@hotmail.com and blacktownhacket@hotmail.com or write to CIDKP, PO Box 22, Mae Sot, Tak 63110, Thailand.



Phan Foundation finds a worthy winner

The Phan Foundation, set up to honour the life and work of assassinated Karen National Union (KNU) leader Pado Mahn Sha Lah Phan has awarded \$2,000 to Naw Paw K' Blah Htoo for her work.

Naw Paw K' Blah Htoo, 26, works for the Karen Youth Organisation and the Karen Women's Organisation in Kler Lwee Htoo district of Karen State.

Naw Paw K' Blah Htoo received the Phan Foundation Award on the 60th anniversary of Karen Revolution Day.

Naw Paw K' Blah Htoo says she was surprised and proud to be the first winner of the award.

"I am so happy that I received the award. I've heard about it from the radio and I thought other young leaders would win it. I was very surprised and excited when my name was announced."

A Phan Foundation spokesperson says the foundation was established by the four children of Mahn Sha Lah Phan, the former general secretary of the Karen National Union (KNU).

"The Phan Foundation plans to honor a stand out young leader every year. The aim of the award is to encourage new young leaders to value their work, work hard and to develop their communities."

Naw Paw K' Blah Htoo explains how she will use the award money. "I am going to send four children to school whose parents can't afford to do it."

Naw Paw K' Blah Htoo was born at Ler Mu Plaw village in Mu Traw (Papun) district, Karen State. She studied up to middle school inside Karen State and finished high school in Mae Khong Kah refugee camp. After that she went back to Karen State and worked with the KYO in Mu Traw district. Then

she attended Karen Youth Leadership Training for one year and was then sent to work in Kler Lwee Htoo (Nyaunglebin) district, Karen State. She has been working full time at the district level as a staff member of KYO and KWO committees. In 2008, she was elected as a permanent committee member of Kler Lwee Htoo district and is responsible for information and publications.

Naw Paw K' Blah Htoo says she wants to encourage and see more young people work in their communities.

"I want Karen youth to open their eyes to politics, get involved and work for our community. I also hope to see more young Karen women and men working shoulder to shoulder with men and women of other nationalities for national peace."

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Why I joined the revolution

Among the large crowd of Karen soldiers, villagers, visitors and international and local journalists at the celebration of Karen Revolution Day, *Inside News* spoke to a soldier who craves unity and peace for his people.

Saw Dee Poe 23 is from Mone Township, Nyaunglebin district. He is one of 13 children. He was a sergeant in the Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA) but now he is studying at the Officer Training School inside Karen State.

He talks about his experience as a soldier.

"I joined the KNLA in 2002. It is not a comfortable life. It's far from a bed of flowers. We have little arms or supplies but I hope one day we will have peace."

The Karen struggle has been going on for 60 years and today there seems little chance of change. Recently, the Burmese army has mounted its largest offensive against the Karen people in eastern Burma for 10 years. According to aid agency, the Thai Burma Border Consortium (TBBC), as many as 76,000 villagers have been displaced in 2007.

Saw Dee Poe explains what the Karen struggle means to him. "We are opposed to a military regime who oppress, bully and deny us our basic rights.

We have to fight or we will disappear. We need to be political but we also need to stand and fight for our rights."

Every year, on The 31st January, Karen people around the world celebrate the Karen Revolution.

Saw Dee Poe says this year celebration is the biggest. "This 60th Anniversary was fun and I got lots of strength from well-wishers to carry on fighting for our cause. The Karen Revolution will not end easily and the Karen people will not give up."

Saw Dee Poe added that as long as the Burmese military regime is in power, Karen people will have to struggle. "If the military regime is not changing their system of control, we will have to write our own history."

Saw Dee Poe said there is an urgent need for people to work together.

"As long as the Burmese military regime is in power, the Karen revolution will have to struggle on."

"We need more unity in our revolution. If we work together we will reach our goal."

Dee Poe warns that the Karen have to be careful and not get divided. "We need to listen to our own KNU policy. We should unite and have one vision."

Dance to victory

Karen celebrations always include dancing and in particular the Done dance. This year's 60th celebrations of the Karen Revolution Day is a chance for dancers to show they had lost none of their heritage.

Naw Htee Lah Hay Ku waves her arm around the packed parade ground and stops when she has completed a half circle. All around her young men and women are dressed in traditional Karen costumes, their faces tight with anticipation as they await the call to dance.

Naw Htee Lah Hay Ku is a member of a troupe of Done dancers.

"We are very happy that we have the opportunity to celebrate our Karen revolution day in dance."

She says the younger generation has a limited knowledge of the struggle and huge sacrifices the older people have made in the past.

"Our elder Karen leaders know why the Karen revolution started. Young people don't know and I think they need to know and understand it."

Naw Htee Lah Hay Ku spoke of what the Day means to her.

"It reminds me of our past leaders. They had good thinking. Our Karen revolution was started to save and protect our people, to gain our equal rights. We want our nation to be free. We want our people to gain freedom and to have rights as other free nations have. We want other people to know us as a nationality. We want

to save our culture." Naw Htee Lah Hay Ku says division among Karen people has prolonged the struggle.

"Our revolution is now 60 years. We have had many groups break away. Sometime we misunderstand each other and don't trust one another. This is the time when our enemy separate us. It's slowly undermining the unity among our people."

She warns that disunity will not lead to victory.

"If we don't unite, it is not possible to reach our goal. We have suffered, been displaced and taken refuge in neighbouring countries. We need to unite and work hard because our revolution is for all Karen people."

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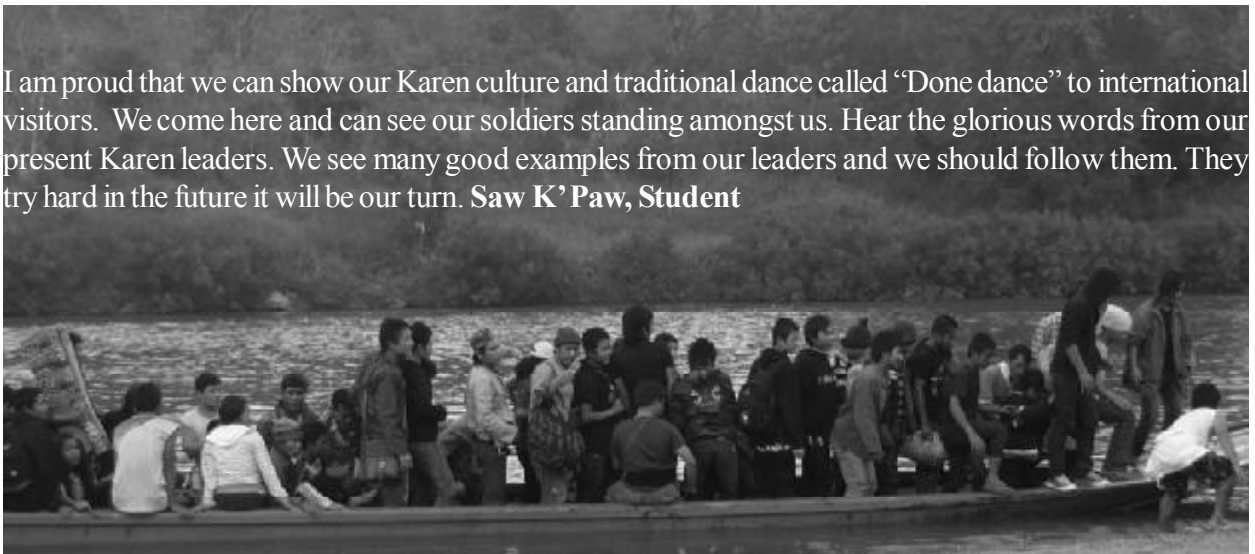


What Karen people say-



We need to gain freedom and equal rights. Even though the Burmese's regime tried to demolish us, they couldn't. Our past and present leaders have suffered from many difficulties, but they don't surrender. They are a good example for our generation. We live and follow the four principles of our first Karen martyr Saw Ba U Kyi. We feel proud that we are still standing. **Naw Eh Eh Poe, Medic**

I am delighted to be here on Karen revolution day. It's took me one day to walk to the ceremony place. This is my first time. The Burmese army does not allow us to celebrate the Karen revolution day. I have a son who is eager to join the Karen revolution and I am happy that my son can help his people to be free. **Maung Kyaw Hai Moe, villager**



I am proud that we can show our Karen culture and traditional dance called "Done dance" to international visitors. We come here and can see our soldiers standing amongst us. Hear the glorious words from our present Karen leaders. We see many good examples from our leaders and we should follow them. They try hard in the future it will be our turn. **Saw K' Paw, Student**

I am here today for my own experience. Because of our Karen revolution, we still have some rights. We can still live and study even though it is difficult. Our lives would be much harder without our Karen revolution. Stay under our own peoples' control is better than staying under the Burmese military dictatorship. The Burmese's regime can't destroy our people. **Saw Htoo Kaw, Student**

-about Karen Revolution



I am lucky and proud that I can come to the celebration of the 60th anniversary of our Karen revolution day. Many people want to come but they can't. Our Karen soldiers have sacrificed their lives for us. The celebration shows Karen eager to keep their revolution alive. I have also decided to work for my people as much as I can.

Naw Wah Stee, member of Karen Women's Organisation (KWO)

I have a confidence one day we will have peace in our country. I hadn't expected to see crowds of people like this at the celebration of our Karen Revolution Day.

Saw Raw Lai, General (KNLA)

Many foreigners say, "why don't you Karen give up your struggle". How can we, if we do, we lose our culture and our sacrifice has been for nothing. The resolve of our people is strong, we want our freedom and our rights to live as Karen.

Naw Lil Eh Paw, village teacher.



Thai Foreign Minister meets

KNU leaders to discuss peace

The Thai foreign minister Kasit Piromya, who had recently visited Burma, met with Karen National Union (KNU) leaders on April 6 in Bangkok.

KNU voice chairman, Pado David Thakabaw told Karen Reporters.

“Authorities from Thailand contacted us and we met informally. Thailand is currently chairing ASEAN, so they may be trying to help with issues of its member countries, including

Naw Zippora Sein, General Mutu Saepoe had a two hour meeting with Thai foreign minister Kasit Piromya and his officials from Foreign Affairs office.

The two groups discussed national reconciliation in Burma, human right violations in Karen state, Dam projects and other relevant issues.

KNU general secretary, Naw Zippora Sein reported that the Thai foreign minister said that after their meeting, he will contact the

survey research.”

The Thai foreign minister said the meeting between the KNU was possible because the Burmese regime’s Prime Minister, General Thein Sein requested Thailand to approach the armed opposition groups in order to assist with Burma’s national reconciliation.

David Thakabaw said the meeting also presented an opportunity for the KNU to have political dialogue with the regime.

“The KNU is trying to find ways to solve the political problems in a peaceful way. We must pressure the SPDC to this in a right way. KNU will talk on our principles and policies that have been agreed to by our people. We have to avoid getting tricked by the regimes empty promises. The KNU accepts Thailand as a negotiator.”

Previous talks between the KNU and the Burmese regime have failed. Observers say the discussions failed because of the regime insisting the KNU return to the Burmese ‘legal fold’, a process the KNU does not recognize as valid.

The last ceasefire between the KNU and the Burmese army collapsed in 2005 after many Karen villages were attacked. According to international human rights groups, in 2006, the Burmese army moved a third of its armed forces to Eastern Burma and carried out its biggest offensive against the Karen people in decades, displacing as many as 76,000 villagers.

Translated from KIC news



Kasit Piromya



Zippora Sein

Burma.”

David Thakabaw said the Thai foreign minister told him that during his visit to Burma, General Thein Sein, Burma’s prime minister, asked him for help as they would like to meet with the KNU to encourage national reconciliation between the two sides.

KNU representatives, including vice-chairman, Saw David Thakabaw, General Secretary

Burmese military government to discuss the issues.

Naw Zippora Sein explained to reporters in more detail aspects of the Bangkok meeting.

“We discussed human right violations committed by the SPDC soldiers and the impact of dam projects on local communities in Karen state. The foreign minister said he would meet with the Electricity Generating Authority of Thailand (EGAT) and study their

Our choice!

**By Kwe Htoo*

Our Karen history has taught us that we, the Karen and other ethnic minorities have been oppressed brutally by Burmese military dictators. The daily oppressions we face are real — we all know, see, feel and experience them in various corners of our life. Our land, our belongings, properties that had been given to us by our past generations have been looted by

Burmese bandits masquerading as soldiers. Our villages have been destroyed, homes relocated, our houses burnt down, our people forced to slave, pay extortions, and some have been slaughtered like animals. This nightmare has caused our lives to disintegrate. We have been refugees, resettled in other countries and being looked down upon as second rate. At present, even though we

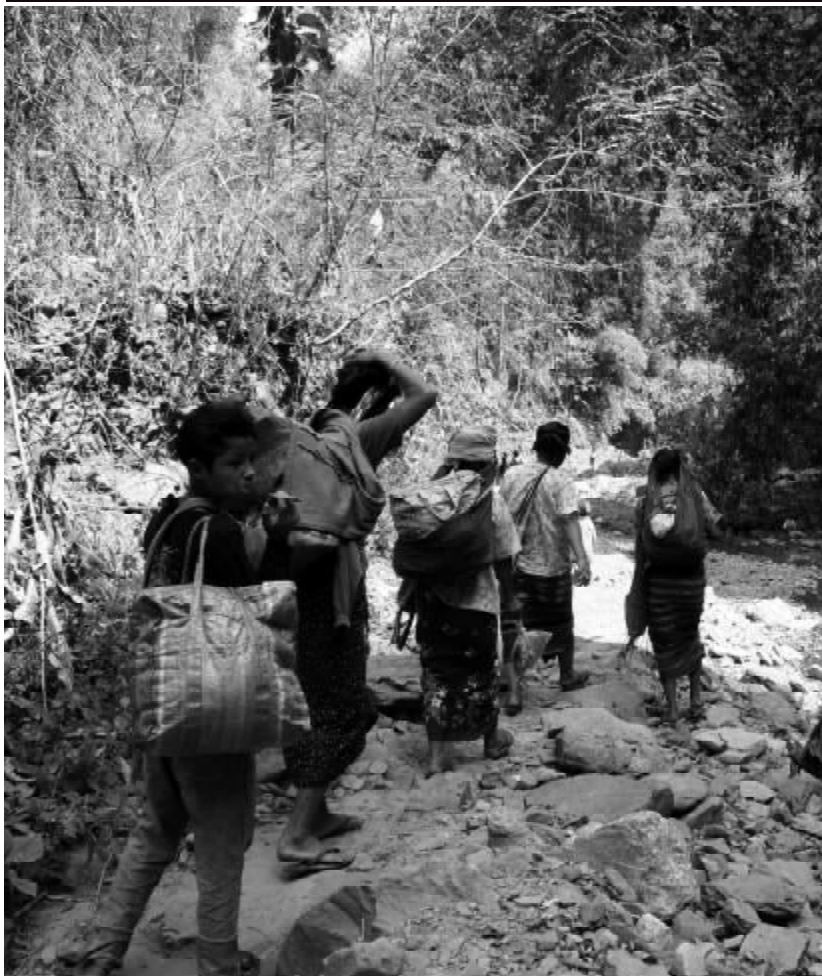
are living as a nationality, we don't have the right to decide our own destiny.

In order for Karen to get out of this disaster, live a free and peaceful life and develop as other people we need to keep struggling. Ours is the longest revolution of this era. But, the Karen hasn't reached its goal or aim yet. We have gone through many challenges and disasters in the 60 years that have passed, we will continue to face challenges that threaten our goals, our future struggle and the development of our Karen people. The problems that we are now facing, are not only for the Karen, all ethnic minorities that are living in Burma are facing the same situation.

As the military regime forcibly ratified their National Constitution in a sham National Referendum in 2007, the first step to legalize their power in national elections in 2010. The regime will continue to legalize their military rule which will not be amendable or challengeable with their victory in the coming national election in 2010. This is a big challenge for our people and all the people of Burma. The question is how are we going to face or oppose it? Are we going to accept the regime and the military rule forever? Or oppose it united and together to try to abolish military rule and build a new life that is free from brutal military oppression? The answer is in the hands of all ethnic groups in Burma. It is our choice.

*This article is not necessarily the view of CIDKP
If you have a point of view you want to share, contact Inside News at:
insidenews_cidkp@hotmail.com

Are we going to accept the regime and the military rule forever?



Cyclone Nargis - -winds of destruction.



Photo-Internet

Burma's survivors are still dealing with their shock and grief of last year's cyclone. It is a year since Cyclone Nargis devastated southern Burma leaving the dead in creeks, fields and trees, smashing houses leaving thousands homeless.

Today beneath the surface, physical and psychological scars have yet to heal. The people of the Irrawaddy delta are no longer dying but communities are struggling. They have been provided with shelter, the roofs so flimsy that a strong wind would destroy them. Aid groups have delivered food, but most villagers are unable to provide for their families. Their livestock including their buffaloes are dead and have yet to be replaced.

Even as aid trickles into Burma, beneath the surface the military regime still persecutes its people. Political opponents are jailed for helping to deliver aid to the cyclone victims, foreign journalists are still banned from reporting in Burma, human rights violations in Eastern Burma continue as the army persecutes the Karen.

Winds of destruction — Cyclone facts

- **138,400** deaths due to Cyclone Nargis
- **54%** of victims were children
- **2,000** children orphaned
- **2.4m** villagers affected by the cyclone
- **£320m** target for the United Nations emergency appeal
- **£150m** raised after six months
- **£211m** raised so far
- **£6.7m** lost by the UN in an exchange-rate scam led by the junta
- **130** tonnes of aid sent to Burma by the Red Cross
- **350** tonnes of medical supplies distributed by the World Health Organisation
- **21** political prisoners arrested for helping victims without permission

(Source Times online: <http://www.timesonline.co.uk>)

REPORT: Regime abuses relief efforts

A report by researchers from Johns Hopkins University (US) and the Emergency Assistance Team (Eat-Burma) alleges Burma's military regime deliberately blocked international aid for last year's cyclone victims.

The report *After the Storm: Voices from the Delta*; details the regime's initial lack of response to cyclone Nargis (that killed 140,000 people) and to the plight of 3.4 million survivors. The report analyses how the military regime failed to provide food, shelter or clean water for survivors.

The report called for the United Nations security council to refer the regime to the international criminal court.

The report found that the Burmese army blocked cyclone relief efforts including arresting those trying to help.

The report claims international donations eventually allowed into Burma were taken by the army and sold in markets.

A former Burmese soldier now living in Mae Sot

told researchers.

"The materials were supposed to go to the victims. I could recognise them in the market."

The researchers were told by survivors that men, women and children were used as forced labour on reconstruction projects by the military.

"Everyone in the village was required to work for five days, morning and evening without compensation. Children were required to work too. A boy got injured on his leg and got a fever. After two or three days he was taken to [Rangoon], but after a few days he died."

Professor Chris Beyrer, director of the centre for public health and human rights at Johns Hopkins, was reported in *The Guardian* (UK) as saying that 'the Burmese regime's response to the disaster violated humanitarian relief norms and legal frameworks for relief efforts'... "intentionally causing great suffering, or serious injury to body or to mental or physical health".



Photo-Internet

Aung San Suu Kyi faces jail sentence

On Monday 18 May, the National League for Democracy leader, Daw Aung Suu Kyi was put on trial in Burma's notorious Insein jail in what many international human rights groups say is an attempt to remove her from politics.

Burma's regime also caught the brunt of unusually sharp criticism from a Southeast Asian nation, Philippine Foreign Affairs Secretary Alberto Romulo was reported as saying that his government was "deeply troubled and outraged" over the "trumped-up charges" against Suu Kyi.

"We urge the government of Myanmar to resolve the matter speedily and to release Aung San Suu Kyi immediately and unconditionally," he said.

Aung Suu Kyi now faces up to five years' in prison after she was charged that she violated conditions of her house arrest. The regime's charges claim she gave shelter to an US citizen, John William Yettaw, who swam to her lakeside residence earlier this month.

The latest charges are widely seen as a pretext for the military regime to keep Suu Kyi in jail past elections scheduled for 2010 as the culmination of the regime's "roadmap to democracy" which has been criticized as a means to continue military control.

The Karen National Union strongly condemned Burma's military dictatorship for arresting pro-democracy leader, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, and called for her immediate release. A statement released by the KNU said.



Photo-Internet

"Daw Suu has been unlawfully detained by the dictatorship, for 11 of the past 19 years. It is clear that the vengeful and hate-laden SPDC dictators are plotting to further extend her detention beyond proposed elections in 2010."

It is unclear what Yettaw's motives were, but his act drew plenty of criticism from pro-democracy groups and his family who claim he is an ex-Vietnam veteran, suffering from post-traumatic stress disorders.

In Monday's court session, Suu

Kyi's defense team will ask for an open trial and may also request bail. The prosecution is expected to call 22 witnesses during the trial.

Her latest arrest has sparked a storm of international appeals to Burma's government to free her and to restore democracy in the country.

Burma has been ruled by its military since 1962. The military lost democratic elections in 1990 but did not honor the landslide victory of Suu Kyi's party.

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House of tears

The Thai Burma Border Consortium (TBBC) estimates that the Burmese army has about a third of its forces in Eastern Burma. Villages are forced to relocate by the army and those who do not follow the orders are regarded as the enemy. The TBBC reports that as many as “3200 villages were destroyed, forcibly relocated or other wise abandoned in eastern Burma between 1996 and 2006. *Inside News* reporters based in eastern Burma visited relocated villages to see how people were coping. Villagers in the forced relocation sites in Kler Lwee Htoo district say they are facing more and more difficulties to earn a living because of the various restrictions and human right abuses by the army. Villagers say they have problems in getting enough food, access to health care and no education opportunities for their children. In the mountain region of Kler Lwee Htoo district, displaced villagers have been unable to work because of Burma army operations, extortion threats and forced labor orders.

According to a field worker with the Committee of Internally Displaced Karen People (CIDKP), villagers reported that there is no benefits at all living in a relocation site.

A villager from Maw Keh Tha Per Kho recalls how the problems started.

“Since 2006, the Burma Army Military Operation Command 16 came into our area and has been imposing restriction on villagers. Sometimes we couldn’t go to

“...we are not allowed to tend our fields or crops.”

work, we had to stay in the village compound. We faced food shortage problems because we aren’t allowed to tend our fields or crops.”

Villagers relocated from hill regions to flat land are suffering.

In the past they used slash-burn cultivation plantations. Now they have to try to earn a living as daily laborers. This makes it really difficult for these villagers.

A villager from Yu Lo village said problems in her house means it is always full of tears.

“As conditions get worse, we will end up begging for our food.”

A Ko Ni villager said that she didn’t want to move but couldn’t do anything about it and it broke her heart.

“I face big problems. Before, we gave money to them [Burmese army] in order not to be relocated but it didn’t make any difference, they cheated us. We were forced to move and my tears came as I dismantled my house.”

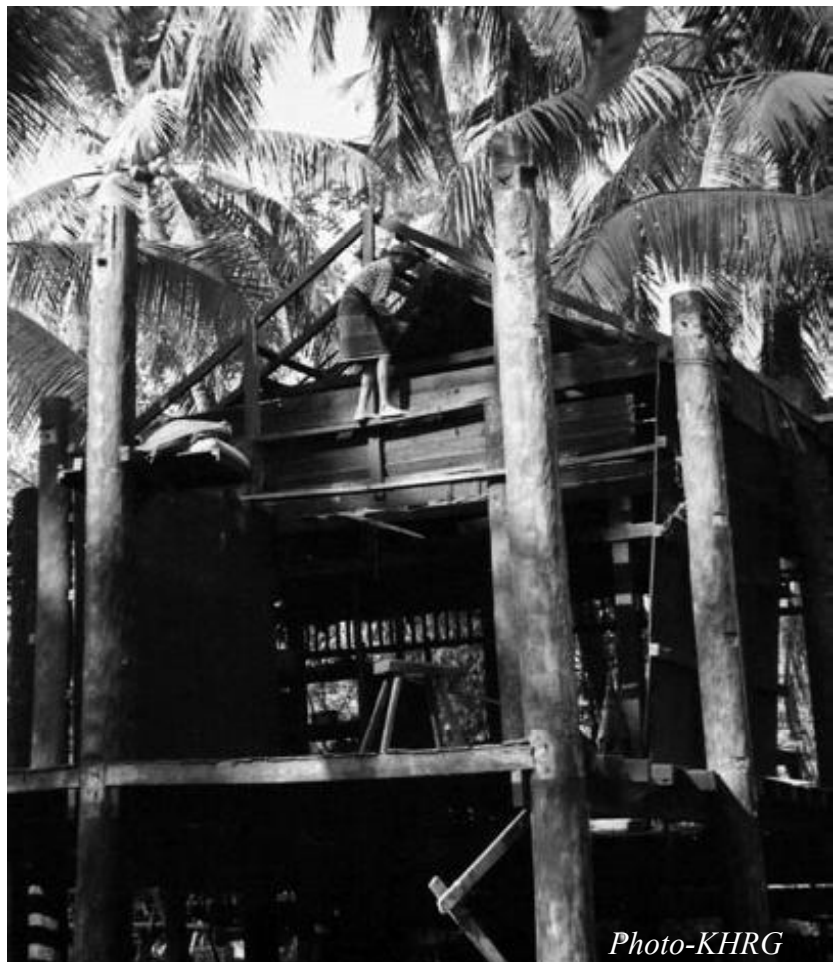


Photo-KHRG

Malaria on ~



Mae Tao Clinic on the Thai Burma border treats as many as 100,000 Burmese people a year. Many travel hundreds of kilometers to get health care. *Inside News* spoke to medics in the busy malaria laboratory.

Saw Hsa Ka Paw, the laboratory manager says the Clinic patients come from villages along the borderline.

“Malaria is the most common ailment we see at the Clinic. It’s mostly, people from Karen villages along the Thai Burma border. We see an average of 5,000 cases each year. But in 2008 and 2009 it has

increased. People can’t get medical help nor can they afford to pay the [medical] costs in Burma, so they travel here for treatment.”

The World Health Organisation ranks Burma as the second worst country for health care – it is listed as 191 out of 192 countries.

According to a Karen villager, there are no health care services or medics in his village or surrounding villages in the remote hill regions. He says because of traveling difficulties -rough terrain, soldiers and landmines – villagers who get sick, only go to the clinic when the illness is severe.

~the increase

Saw Hsa Ka Paw says.

“This puts additional strain on our services as the patient now needs critical care. If we can see the patient early, we can stop the illness developing into something serious or chronic.”

A village, Saw Win, from Thae Bo in Karen state, now a malaria patient at the Clinic, explains.

“Our house has a porous roof and the walls are open. Mosquitos can easily get in. When we work at the sawmill, its easier and cheaper to sleep there. We don’t have nets or mats.” Saw Win says both he and his daughter got malaria and came to Mae Tao Clinic for treatment. “Our village is close to Kouko Clinic (in Burma), but we be can’t afford the treatment. Since we don’t have money, we came here.”

Saw Win says Thae Bo village has more than a hundred households, but many malaria patients cannot come to the clinic because of the traveling difficulties.

“In our village, many people get malaria. Many cannot come here because of the time

it takes.” Malaria if not treated in time can cause many additional complications and even death. According to a report by the Back Pack Health Worker Team (BPHWT) malaria continues to be the number one killer in eastern Burma – “with over 12 percent of the population infected with *Plasmodium falciparum*, the most dangerous form of malaria. A medic says.

“There are patients who were not treated on time at the clinic, the complications are severe. It takes time and resources to treat them but by coming here they will get better.”

A health worker from the Clinic’s malaria department, says in order for people not to get malaria, they should sleep on a mat inside mosquito nets, they should cover water pots or avoid having open water around their houses and should go to the clinic for a blood test every six months.

Malaria usually has the following symptoms: headache, fever, shaking, and aches and pains and tiredness.



Photo-SMRU

Preventing --



Children in Burma are more likely to die from preventable illnesses than children in neighboring countries according to a report, "Chronic Emergency" by the Back Pack Health Workers Team (BPHWT). *Inside News* visited Mae Tao Clinic to witness the effects of Burma's health crisis. The report, 'Chronic Emergency' states that the military misrule has meant the collapse of Burma's health system. To support their statements the report estimates the Burmese regime spends less than three percent of its national budget on health. In response to Burma's mismanagement of its health

care system and the constant deluge of people seeking medical care, Mae Tao Clinic provides treatment to all people without discrimination.

Medic, Saw Ah Kay, has worked at Mae Tao Clinic for three years and spoke to *Inside News* about the illnesses and patients he treats.

"Diarrhea is common among displaced people, migrant workers and refugees. The most serious diarrhea is caused by cholera. Diarrhea spreads quickly among kids and adults."

Saw Ah Kay says diarrhea is mostly caused by eating unclean food and people not washing their hands

--diarrhea

properly.

“Diarrhea can happen easily when eating bad food, drinking unclean water or eating rotten fruit.”

Saw Ah Kay explains the symptoms of diarrhea.

“They will be tired, weak and lose weight and become dehydrated.” Saw Ah Kay warns that diarrhea is a potentially fatal disease if not treated quickly.

“We have seen people die from this diarrhea, because they did not receive treatment in time.”

Saw Thet Wei, 48, from Mae Ku village has just recovered from diarrhea and says.

“I got diarrhea from eating bad food. My belly was boiling. I kept going to toilet until I was shitting only water and it continued day and night. I went to the Clinic and they treated me. It took me five days to recover. I was very tired and really thin.”

Mae Tao Clinic’s Medics are proud and happy that

they can help people, but warn that people have to be educated to prevent simple illnesses becoming dangerous.

Saw Ah Kay advises people to prevent themselves from getting diarrhea they should do the following:

1. Wash hands properly before and after meals
2. Wash hands with soap after using the toilet
3. Eat fresh and green vegetables
4. Keep the dining area clean
5. Keep food covered.
6. Drink clean and boiled water.
7. Keep toilets covered.
8. Do not eat rotten food or fruit
9. If sick get medical help quickly

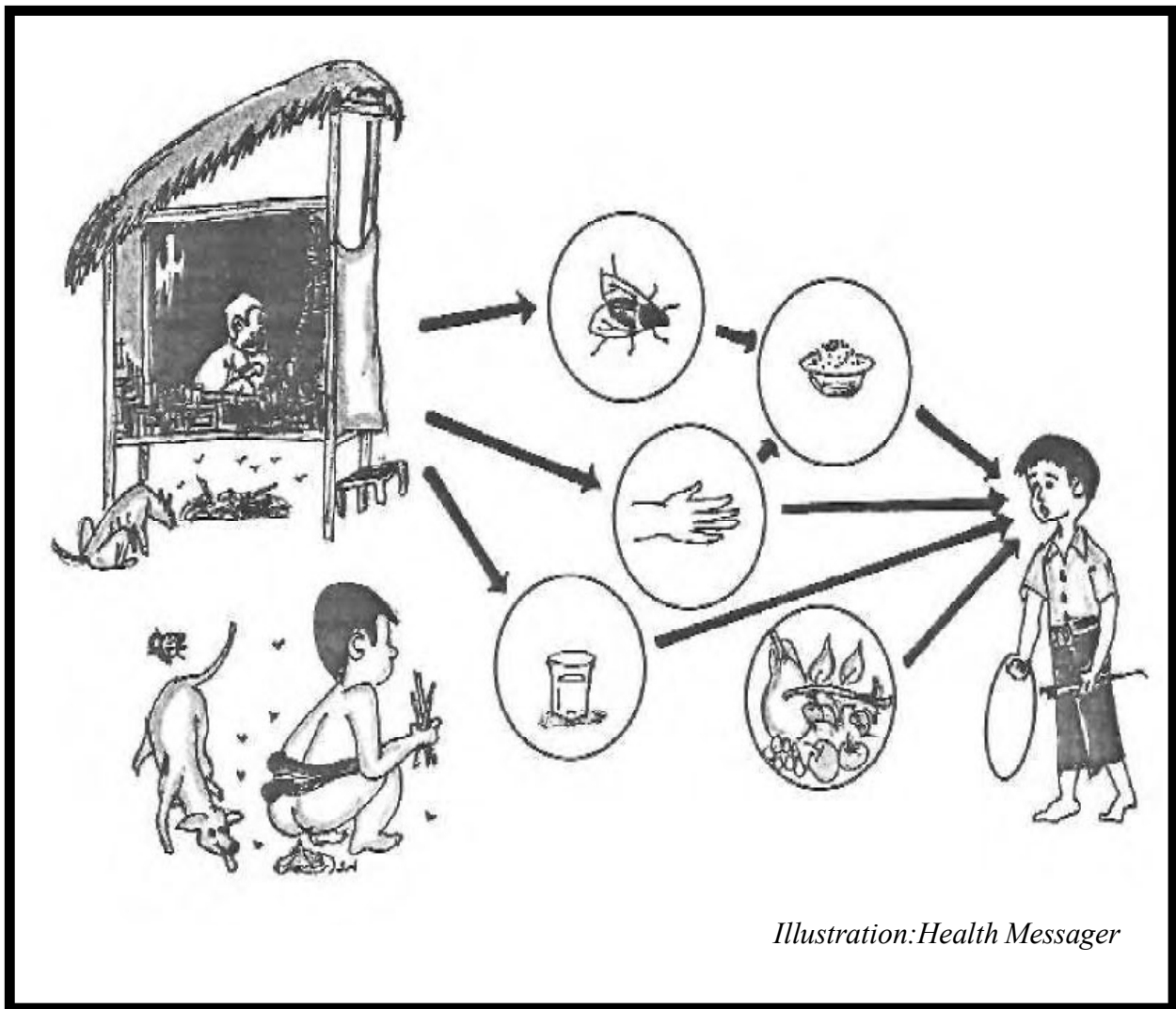


Illustration: Health Messenger

Burmese army attack village

The Burmese army continues its crackdown against Karen villagers in Eastern Burma. *Inside News* reporters visited recent battle sites and spoke to villagers caught in the conflict.

The Burmese army Infantry Battalion 562 fired mortars into Play Hsa Lo village wounding nine villagers.

wounding three of his children and six villagers. It was terrible. Ko Min Khin, was hit in three places on his neck and is in serious condition.”

Villagers says the troops based near Play Hsa Lo often shoot machine guns and mortar shells into the village. The situation in other villages is similar — villagers

Naw Eh K’ Lu says the wounded villagers were treating the shrapnel wounds with herbal packs.

“The shell splinters are still in their bodies, so all they can do is they go to the traditional healer for

treatment.”

Play Hsa Lo village is a Burmese army designated relocation site in Maw Nay Bwa area, Tantabin Townhsip, Taungoo District. Villages that were forced to go to Play Hsa Lo are from Yer Lo, Plaw Baw Der, Lay Ho Lo and Po Pah villages. Naw Eh K’ Lu said there is no transport or work in Play Hsa Lo village because of restrictions imposed by the soldiers.

“The army has blocked the road and they issue travel passes. It is very difficult to go out and work. Even though Play Hsa Lo is an official relocation site, there is no clinic or medicine available for villagers and the sick have to rely on traditional healer for treatment. There is also no school and many children can’t go to school.”

Naw Eh K’ Lu condemns the military regime for lack of development in the relocation site and using villagers as forced labor. “They order us to carry their food supplies, collect bamboo, make fences around the camp and the village and building roads.”

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Villager, Naw Eh K’ Lu, who witnessed the battle told *Inside News* that, Burmese army troops, based about a mile away from Play Hsa Lo, shot machine guns and mortar shells into her village.

“At about 8pm the soldiers fired mortars into village. The mortars hit Saw Soe Shwe’s house

live in fear that the mortar shells will hit them.

Naw Eh K’ Lu said that villagers tried to take the injured to the Burmese army camp for treatment.

“Villagers brought the wounded to the army camp but the soldiers didn’t treat them.”

We want work...

A lack of paid work opportunities, military attacks and human rights abuses are forcing young ethnic men and women to leave their Burmese villages to search for work or a chance of a better life in neighboring countries. *Inside News* reports from Karen State. In Pa-an Township, officials say more and more Karen youth are going to neighboring countries to find ways to send money back home to feed their families.

Saw Shada Thein, a township official in Pa-an Township, explains the current situation in his township.

“More and more young people are going to Thailand and Malaysia to find jobs because there is no work locally. The value of the Burma currency [kyat] is very low so they try to find work on the Thai border.”

The New York based Human Rights Watch confirms in their World Report 2009 that thousands of Burmese refugees and migrant workers are traveling to Bangladesh, Malaysia, Thailand, India and Singapore to escape the political turmoil and economic crisis in Burma.

Saw Shada Thein said he’s concerned about young Karen in other countries.

“Working in other countries is dangerous, especially for young inexperienced people. Their parents are worried. Some hear from their kids and they do send money home, but for some, their parents don’t even know if they are still alive or dead, it causes lots of worry for parents.”

A member of the Karen Youth Organization in Pa-an township

says that only the old people are left to work the fields.

“At harvest time, farms or plantations need to hire workers, but there are no youth left only older people. Local farms or plantations do not pay enough so young people have to go away to earn enough money to send home for the family to live. Many farms or plantations are now in ruins because no one works them.”

According to the Migrant Assistance Project, migrant workers face many risks. Many cannot afford legal documentation and are prone to abuses from employers and police. They are harassed, arrested and face deportation. They also are at the mercy of unscrupulous job agents and traffickers.

A Bilin Township [Karen state] official told *Inside News* that young people are caught in a difficult position.

“Those who don’t migrate have to face threats and harassment from the military regime-sponsored Democratic Karen Buddhists Army and from Burmese army soldiers.

“The soldiers extort food and money from villagers. They also want people to work for them for nothing. The people have enough problems just trying to make a living from the land without the continual demands for forced labor, food and supplies. It’s no wonder young people are prepared to risk all in another country.”



Photo-Internet

